

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A print tracking system on a computer network, comprising:
  - (a) a message queue, wherein said message queue is formatted to comprise a plurality of records, and wherein each of the records comprise data pertaining to a print job submitted by a user at a client computer;
  - (b) an unbilled print alert resident on the client computer; and
  - (c) a workstation monitor in communication across the network with said message queue and said unbilled print alert, wherein said workstation monitor comprises the capability of transmitting a message to said unbilled print alert if said message queue contains a record pertaining to a print job submitted by the user.
2. The print tracking system of claim 1, wherein said unbilled print alert comprises one of an icon and a message that appears on a computer screen associated with the client computer.
3. The print tracking system of claim 1, further comprising a printer monitor in communication with the client computer, wherein said printer monitor comprises the capability to monitor the client computer for the submission of a print job by the user and to create a record pertaining to the print job submitted by the user.
4. The print tracking system of claim 3, further comprising a billing dialogue, wherein said billing dialogue comprises the capability to receive qualification data from the user at the client computer.

5. The print tracking system of claim 4, wherein said billing dialogue comprises a graphical user interface.

6. The print tracking system of claim 4, further comprising a manager's module, wherein said manager's module comprises the capability of setting a maximum unbilled print job value.

7. The print tracking system of claim 6, wherein said billing dialogue further comprises the capability of forcing the user to enter qualification data before proceeding when the number of records pertaining to a print job submitted by the user exceeds the maximum unbilled print job value.

8. The print tracking system of claim 7, wherein said billing dialogue further comprises the capability of obscuring the screen of the client computer when the number of records pertaining to a print job submitted by the user exceeds the maximum unbilled print job value.

9. A computer network, comprising:

(a) a communications medium;

(b) at least one client computer connected to said communications medium;

(b) at least one server connected to said communications medium;

(c) at least one printer connected to said communications medium;

(d) a message queue connected to said communications medium,

wherein said message queue is capable of storing at least one record,

and wherein each of said records comprise data pertaining to a print

job submitted by a user at one of said client computers; and

(e) a workstation monitor resident on said client computer, wherein said workstation monitor transmits a message to said client computer if said message queue contains a record pertaining to a print job submitted by the user.

10. The computer network of claim 9, further comprising an unbilled print alert connected to said communications medium.

11. The computer network of claim 10, wherein said unbilled print alert comprises one of an icon and a message that appears on a computer screen associated with said client computer.

12. The computer network of claim 10, further comprising a printer monitor resident on one of said client computer and said server, wherein said printer monitor comprises the capability to monitor said client computer for the submission of a print job by the user and to create a record pertaining to the print job submitted by the user.

13. The computer network of claim 12, further comprising a billing dialogue resident on said client computer, wherein said billing dialogue comprises the capability to receive qualification data from the user.

14. The computer network of claim 13, wherein said billing dialogue comprises a graphical user interface appearing on a computer screen associated with said client computer.

15. The computer network of claim 13, further comprising a manager's module resident on one of said client computer and said server, wherein said manager's module comprises the capability of setting a maximum unbilled print job value.

16. The computer network of claim 15, wherein said billing dialogue further comprises the capability of forcing the user to enter qualification data before proceeding when the number of records pertaining to a print job submitted by the user exceeds the maximum unbilled print job value.

17. The computer network of claim 16, wherein said billing dialogue further comprises the capability of obscuring a screen associated with the client computer when the number of records pertaining to a print job submitted by the user exceeds the maximum unbilled print job value.

18. A method of tracking print jobs on a computer network, comprising the steps of:

- (a) detecting a print job sent by a user from a client computer;
- (b) writing a record comprising data pertaining to the print job to a message queue;
- (c) creating an unbilled message alert if a record is detected in the message queue for the user.

19. The method of claim 18, wherein said creating an unbilled message alert comprises the step of displaying one of an icon and a message on a computer screen associated with the client computer.

20. The method of claim 18, further comprising the step of initiating a billing dialogue when the number of records in the message queue exceeds an unbilled print job value.

21. The method of claim 20, further comprising the step of initiating a billing dialogue in response to a user request.

22. The method of claim 20, wherein said step of initiating a billing dialogue further comprises the step of creating a graphical user interface on the client computer.

23. The method of claim 20, further comprising the step of clearing the record from the message queue when the user completes the billing dialogue associated with the record.

24. The method of claim 23, further comprising the step of setting a maximum unbilled print job value.

25. The method of claim 20, wherein said step of initiating a billing dialogue further comprises the step of forcing the user to enter qualification data before proceeding when the number of records pertaining to a print job submitted by the user exceeds the maximum unbilled print job value.

26. The method of claim 25, wherein said step of forcing the user to enter qualification data before proceeding when the number of records pertaining to a print job submitted by the user exceeds the maximum unbilled print job value further comprises the step of obscuring the screen of the client computer when the number of records pertaining to a print job submitted by the user exceeds the maximum unbilled print job value.

27. A print tracking system, comprising:

(a) means for detecting a print activity;

(b) means for billing print activity; and

(c) a message queue that functionally separates said means for detecting print activity and said means for billing print activity.

28. The print tracking system of claim 27, wherein said message queue comprises means for receiving information extracted from a print activity.

29. The print tracking system of claim 28, further comprising means for notifying a user of the presence of extracted information in said message queue related to a print activity associated with the user.

30. The print tracking system of claim 29, further comprising a billing dialogue.

31. The print tracking system of claim 30, further comprising means for activating said billing dialogue when said message queue contains information extracted from a number of print activities that exceeds a maximum unbilled print job value.

32. The print tracking system of claim 31, wherein said billing dialogue prevents the user from continuing until billing information is entered.

33. The print tracking system of claim 31, wherein said means for notifying a user of the presence of extracted information in said message queue related to a print activity associated with the user further comprises means for allowing the user to activating said billing dialogue voluntarily.

34. The print tracking system of claim 31, further comprising means for clearing information extracted from a print activity resident in said message queue when the user enters billing information pertaining to the print activity in said billing dialogue.